

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

(Ephesians 1:1)

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is all about the glory God in the life of His church. In particular, the overarching theme of this Pauline epistle is the glory of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in saving His people, in establishing His church and in empowering believers to live Spirit-filled, godly and strong Christian life. In other words, Ephesians teaches us these three foundational Christian doctrines: the greatness of our salvation in Christ (Eph. 1:1-2:10); the glory of the church as the one body of Christ (Eph. 2:11-3:21); and the godly conduct that should characterize the Christian life (Eph. 4:1-6:24). As we consider Paul's opening words, we will be introduced not only to the standard elements of an epistolary salutation but also to two spiritual anchors of the Christian life.

1. Scriptural _____: God's Word is the believer's supreme authority.

Paul begins his letter to the Ephesian believers by identifying himself as the writer of this letter. By introducing himself as the author, he also highlights his apostolic authority (Eph. 1:1). He refers to himself as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ by the will of God (1 Tim. 1:12-16; Eph. 3:8). All the apostles, including Paul, have witnessed the resurrected Christ and are personally chosen and called by the Lord Jesus to preach the gospel of Christ, to perform supernatural miracles, to receive divine revelation and write Scriptures and to establish the New Testament church (Eph. 2:20). Paul is teaching the Ephesian believers and the Christians today that in light his apostolic authority, God's Word to him is God's Word to us. This reminds us that the supreme and final source of authority in all matters of faith and practice is the written Word of God. Hence, whatever the Bible teaches as the truth, we should believe as true. Wherever the Bible issues commands and prohibitions, we are under moral obligation to obey them because they come from God Himself (John 14:15,23). The authority of God's Word should cause us to be still and rest in our God who graciously loves us and sovereignly controls everything in our life (Psalm 46:10; Eph. 1:2, 21; 2:4-5).

2. Christian _____: God's people are the saints and the faithful in Christ.

After identifying himself as the author and sender of this letter, Paul now informs us about the recipients of this divinely inspired and authoritative epistle. They are the saints who are in Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:1). This description of the Ephesian Christians defines the true identity of every believer. Paul teaches us this wonderful truth about the dual identity and designation of the believer: we are saints in this world and believers in Christ Jesus. As saints, we are set apart and consecrated by God Himself for His holy and sacred purpose. Every Christian is a saint because every believer is made holy by God and is given the perfect righteousness of Christ (Rom. 3:20-21; Phil.3:8-9; John 17:14-19). Our true identity is also defined by our faith in Christ and our union with Him (Eph. 1:13). We, as believers exercise faith in Jesus, persevere in our faith through Jesus and overcome the world by the name of Jesus.
